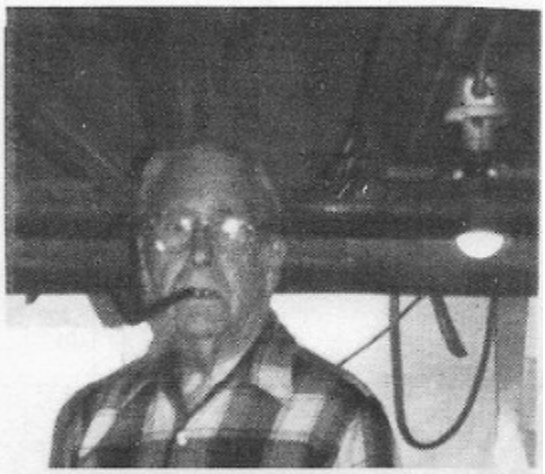
MMR_0005 W. Watson House Honors Chair 1950 still serving in 1967 died Feb 1976



W. WATSON HOUSE

IN MEMORIAM

It is with deep regret we note the passing of a good friend and fellow model railroader, W. WATSON HOUSE, on Monday, February 23, 1976. Besides his well-known contributions to our Region, having served as its President, and having achieved the title of "Master Model Railroader," Watty also served his community as President of the Connecticut Society for Crippled Children and Adults, and was a noted Rotarian and insurance agent. Watty was a Yale University graduate, and had attained the status of a 32nd degree Mason.

Watty will be missed greatly by the Coupler staff, as he was a continued supporter of our efforts and constantly wrote us, encouraging the work we did, praising and criticizing as he felt necessary. His opinions were always appreciated and greatly respected, his letters sometimes were the only things that made this job worthwhile.

Donations in his name may be made to the Easter Seal Society, 682 Prospect Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut.

TO "WATTY" PUBLISHED AUGUST 1976

TO WATTY

by Percy Klinker

W. Watson House . . . an eulogy. My friendship with Watty goes back about 12 years . . . solely by correspondence, although there was a standing invitation to visit the Connecticut Midland at my convenience. Thus, I was deeply saddened to see his name appear in the "In Memoriam" column in the May, 1976, NMRA BULLETIN.

Our last exchange of correspondence was in late 1974—even then his letters spoke of his frustrations with 30-year-old wiring and Code 250 (that's ¼" high) track. His benchwork was 18" off the floor—if frustrated, one simply stepped over the whole silly mess. Heresy, in terms of what is "normal" today, but it worked for Watty, and he could see no reason to change . . . after all, it worked, and worked well, and probably spawned a whole generation of modelers who felt that they could do things better. But he had prototypical operation—both electric and steam, and there are very few of us today who can make the same claim.

Watty's professional life was as an insurance agent. Even after he retired, he would send a calendar each year to his friends. When the 1976 calendar did not arrive, I sensed there were problems . . . an innate sense of tact said, "No, do not enquire." Your questions, Percy, would only cause more problems than they would resolve.

Watty was an early Master Model Railroader—among the first 10, as I recall. No, his work was not equal to the "standards" of the early 1960s, and he knew it. But he was well ahead of the state-of-the-art in the 1930s, and that leadership was the basis on which he based his claim. It was not a question of comparison with what was being done in 1962—it was a question of what was being done in 1937, 25 years earlier.

More important . . . Watty always maintained a lighthearted irreverence towards model railroading. It was important to him, yes, but it occupied its proper place in relationship to family, friends and civic responsibilities. There was a side that many never saw for he was a member of community service organizations and participated in their activities as long as he was able. Yet, his correspondence often had long discussions of model railroading—problems, operating experiences and even some switching problems for the schedule was just as important as the physical movement of trains. There was a delightful undertone of gracious humility: do you have a better answer? No, I will not scoff, said Watty, for there is always something else to be learned.

Watty's service to the NMRA included Chairmanship of the Honors Committee for many years. You, the reader, may not be aware, but this is the committee who recommends the award of NMRA honors to the Board of Trustees: The Distinguished Service Award and Honorary Life Membership. The criteria for selection were not always apparent, especially to those of you who are new to model railroading and the NMRA. Suffice it to say to those who have received them were in general long-overdue in the opinion of those who were really familiar with what they had done.

Watty had one other little known and unpublicized honor. Once there was a very irreverent NMRA AP Chairman who recognized a need for a "special" achievement certificate for recognition of accomplishment outside of that which was recognized by the Achievement Program Regulations. Each Certificate carried the notation: This Certificate Void if Signed by the NMRA Achievement Program Chairman. Watty was one of the few recipients. His award? Master Heretic.

Goodbye, Watty . . . I'll miss you. The hobby will miss you. The world is not quite as nice a place now that you are gone.

PLEASE CONTINUE READING ON FOLLOW PAGE

NMRA Honors Program

W. W. House MMR

Chairman, Honors Committee

In 1946 those NMRA Members ateending the Detroit Convention awarded Al Kalmbach an Honorary Life Membership in the Association in appreciation of his untiring efforts in helping to establish the NMRA on a firm foundation. In 1948 those Members at the Atlanta Convention awarded an Honorary Life Membership to Bernie Gottlieb in recognition of his services to the Association.

After a period of little activity during World War II, the Association again came to life under the most capable leadership of President Herb Schultz. It was at the Board of Trustees Meeting in 1950 that saw the birth of our present Honors Program. W. Watson House, impressed with the revitalization accomplished by President Schultz, presented to the Board a motion to establish an Honors Program. The Board authorized such a program and President Schultz appointed Past President Doc Buyse as Chairman to head a Committee to explore the subject and to report back at the next Board Meeting with recommendations.

With the approval of "Doc" Buyse's Committee recommendations at the next Board of Trustees meeting, our Honors Program had its official start. "Doc" Buyse, leaving the hobby, resigned and "Watty" House was appointed chairman of the Honors Committee in 1951 — a post which he has held to this day. The policy established for granting of Honorary Life Memberships in 1951 is the same policy governing its awarding today.